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WINDOWS

Model and actress Kelly Rohrbach during a golf tournament prior to the Sony Open in Hawaii at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu, Hawaii. — *AFP*

Netanyahu arrives in Delhi Sunday, to hold Guj roadshow

New Delhi: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will arrive in India on January 14 and will go to Agra, Ahmedabad and Mumbai during his visit, the MEA said on Thursday. According to an Ahmedabad civic body official, a joint roadshow on an 8 km stretch from the city airport to the Sabarmati Ashram is also on the cards. Mr Netanyahu's visit is likely to further strengthen defence and security ties.

Full report on Page 4

Afzal's son, Wani's kin pass Class 12

Srinagar: Galib Guru, son of Mohammad Afzal Guru who was executed in 2013 following conviction in the Parliament attack case, and the younger brother of slain Hizbul militant Burhan Wani passed J&K Board of School Education's Class 12 examination with flying colours.

Full report on Page 3

PIO prisoner in US to be executed Feb. 23

Washington: The execution of the first death-row Indian-American prisoner, Raghunandan Yandamuri, 32, convicted of killing a baby and her Indian grandmother in 2014, has been set for February 23.

Full report on Page 10

COUNTERPOINT

Now, he is your Maharaja!

WEATHER

Max: 22.7°C
Min: 8°C
RH: 87%
Rainfall: 20%

Forecast: Shallow fog

ASTROGUIDE

Hemalaba: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Dasami till 4.34 pm
Star: Purvabhadra till 11.05 am
Varjyam: 8.17 pm to 9.49 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4. 56 pm to 5.47 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.44 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.15 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 3.57 AM
MOONSET TODAY 2.18 PM

Doval-Janjua Bangkok meet

'Talks on terror' can definitely go ahead: India

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

In a major admission, India confirmed on Thursday that national security adviser Ajit Doval had indeed met his Pakistani counterpart Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua (Retd) recently but justified the meeting, saying that while "terror and talks cannot go together", "talks on terror can definitely go ahead". The meeting is learnt to have taken place in Bangkok on December 26. The external affairs ministry said: "The focus of the talks was on terror, cross-border terrorism". MEA spokesman Raveesh Kumar said: "I am saying that talks have taken place on how to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from this region," adding India "raised (the issue of) cross-border terrorism in these talks".

The MEA said the talks were part of "operational-level talks". "India and Pakistan have a dialogue process and we have said terror and talks cannot go together. However, there are other dialogue mechanisms like at the DGMO level or between the BSF and Pakistan Rangers. Similarly, the NSA-level engagement is part of operational-level talks. We have said terror and talks cannot go together, but talks on terror can definitely go ahead," the MEA spokesman said, adding that such operational-level talks are "not announced".

> **We have said terror and talks cannot go together, but talks on terror can definitely go ahead**
>
> **— Raveesh Kumar,** *MEA spokesperson*

Nevertheless, the talks indicate that New Delhi — while realising the reality of the Pakistan Army and ISI actively sponsoring terror in India — are also in favour of continuing some sort of engagement quietly with Pakistan. The very fact that the two NSAs had to meet in Bangkok bears testimony to this. Also, observers feel that the views of the Pakistan NSA would indicate in some way what the Pakistan Army wants to be conveyed to India.

The meeting also took place just one day after the wife and mother of

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A newly-raised all-women bikers' contingent of BSF "Daredevils" practises in New Delhi on Thursday ahead of their first performance at the Republic Day Parade. — *PTI*

Modi confers with BJP leaders on poll strategy

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday met BJP leaders, including party president Amit Shah, all general secretaries and some state in-charges. A few Cabinet ministers also attended the dinner meeting at the Prime Minister's official residence that went on till late in the evening. Sources said issues like the coming Assembly elections in seven states, the Budget Session of Parliament and feedback on organisational matters and government schemes, were discussed.

Of the seven states that will go to the polls this year, three — Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan — are BJP-ruled. Speculation is rife that the Narendra Modi government could announce sops for the farming sector and some tax relief for the middle class in the coming Union Budget keeping in mind the Gujarat poll results. The BJP had managed to win for the sixth consecutive time but its tally had decreased to double digits. The farming community in Mr Modi's home state was said to be unhappy with the ruling

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Bhagwat meets MP CM on farm crisis

Bhopal: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat held a closed-door meeting with MP chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Bhopal on Thursday. The meeting holds significance as it came in the wake of a brewing farmer unrest which had manifested in the form of violent agitations last year. Assembly polls are due in November this year. Six farmers were killed when police opened fire on agitating tillers in Mandsaur.

PAGE 2

In a first, woman lawyer elevated to SC judge directly

Indu Malhotra makes history

J. VENKATESAN
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

For the first time in the Supreme Court's history, senior woman lawyer Indu Malhotra has been elevated directly from the Bar as a judge of the court.

In the last two years, senior advocates Rohinton Nariman, Uday Lalit and L. Nageswara Rao were directly appointed as Supreme Court judges, without serving as high court judges. However, Ms Malhotra, 61, is the first woman lawyer to make it to the Supreme Court without having served in a high court.

In 2007, Ms Malhotra, a senior counsel who has been practising law in the Supreme Court for 30 years, became the second woman to be designated as senior advocate by the Supreme Court.

On Wednesday, the collegium comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices J. Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian Joseph, at its meeting, recommended the elevation of Ms Malhotra and Uttarakhand high court chief justice K.M. Joseph as apex court judges.

The law ministry is expected to process this and the two are likely to be appointed within a fortnight.

Since the Supreme Court's inception in 1950, six woman judges have been appointed. They are

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Indu Malhotra

Dhingra will head new '84 riots SIT

New Delhi: A three-member special investigation team headed by former Delhi high court judge Justice S.N. Dhingra was set up by the Supreme Court on Thursday to supervise further probe into 186 anti-Sikh riot cases in which closure reports were filed earlier. Besides Justice Dhingra, Abhishek Dular, a serving 2006 batch IPS officer, and retired IG rank officer Rajdeep Singh would be part of the SIT. The matter will be heard next on March 19.

PAGE 3

BJP plans big Bengal outreach

Party says 'Naba Bongo' is 'non-political', targeted at the intelligentsia

YOJNA GUSAI
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Struggling to consolidate its grip over West Bengal prior to the 2019 general election, the BJP intends to kindle Bengal's pride by evoking Raja Rammohun Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and its own Syama Prasad Mookerjee, among others, in the coming weeks. The campaign, called "Naba Bongo" (New Bengal), is targeted at the Bengali intelligenisa and the "*bhadralok*", who despite repeated attempts have so far steered clear of the saffron brigade's Hinduvta politics.

> **The BJP has not yet been able to make deep inroads into Trinamul territory. Some BJP leaders in Delhi claimed the move to bring in Mukul Roy (from TMC) had failed to evoke the desired response.**

Interestingly, the programme — described by the BJP as a "non-political" one — will be launched on January 28, a day before two byelections are due in the state — one for the Uluberia Lok Sabha seat and the other for the Nabopara Assembly segment. The BJP is contesting both seats. Sources said the BJP's exercise to create a "new Bengal" will continue till the 2019 elections.

While BJP leaders in New Delhi claimed there would be "nothing political" in the campaign, sources said the party will also use the platform to raise corruption cases involving Trinamul Congress leaders, such as in the Narada and Saradha scams, and talk of how West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee was "ignoring Bengal's culture and tradition", and particularly "Hindu Bengalis". The "non-political" programme will also "discuss the Narendra Modi government's schemes and their success, and what the government is doing for the agrarian sector".

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Gadkari erupts at Navy for blocking Malabar Hill jetty

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, JAN. 11

Venting his anger over the Navy red-flagging a floating jetty project in Mumbai and stopping development, Union shipping minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday publicly rejected naval officers' proposal to build residential flats in south Mumbai.

"The Navy is needed at the borders from where terrorists sneak in. Why does everyone (in the Navy) want to stay in south Mumbai? They (Navy) had come to me, asking for a plot (of land). I will not give even an inch of land. Please don't come to me again," Mr Gadkari said at an event in the city in the presence of Western Naval Command chief Vice-Admiral Girish Luthra.

Mr Gadkari's public display of displeasure comes in the backdrop of the Bombay high court refusing permission for a floating jetty at Malabar Hill — citing the Navy's objections due to security reasons — where a floating hotel and seaplane service are slated to come up.

> **The Navy is needed at the borders from where terrorists sneak in. Why does everyone (in the Navy) want to stay in south Mumbai? They (Navy) had come to me, asking for a plot (of land). I will not give even an inch of land.**
>
> **— Nitin Gadkari,** *Union minister*

Claiming that the Navy had stalled the floating jetty plan at Malabar Hill, despite the project virtually getting the high court's nod, Mr Gadkari said, "Stopping such developmental work has become a habit."

Mr Gadkari wondered aloud, "What has the Navy got to do with the Malabar Hill area, which is a private residential

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Aijaz Ahmad Mir

Row as PDP MLA refers to militants as 'martyrs'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, JAN. 11

Ruling PDP legislator Aijaz Ahmad Mir on Thursday stirred a hornet's nest by describing slain Kashmiri militants as "martyrs" and said their deaths should not be celebrated.

"Militants who are from Kashmir and get killed are martyrs, they are our brothers, and some of them are minors who don't even know what they are doing," Mr Mir told reporters outside the Assembly in winter capital Jammu.

The Congress questioned the BJP whether it agrees with what the legislator belonging to its alliance partner in J&K has said.

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India can be hub for firms leaving China, says US envoy

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

US ambassador to India Kenneth Juster said on Thursday that it's time to put a "strategic lens on our economic relationship, just as we have done with our defence relationship."

India, he said, can seize the opportunity to provide "alternative investment hub" for the American companies which are downgrading their operations in China. Mr Juster, who was speaking at an event on "India-US Relations: Building a Durable Partnership for the 21st century", said that "America First" and "Make in India" are not incompatible.

Investing in each other's markets will be mutually beneficial, he said. "It will increase economic interactions and volume of trade, lead to collaboration on emerging technologies and create jobs in both countries," he added.

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Bill to increase allotment of green cards by 45% tabled in US House

LALIT K. JHA
WASHINGTON, JAN. 11

A legislation backed by the Trump administration pushing for merit-based immigration and increasing the allotment of green cards by a 45 per cent annually has been introduced in the House of Representatives, a move that could benefit Indian techies if signed into law.

The legislation "Securing America's Future Act" if passed by Congress and signed into law by US President Donald Trump will end the diversity visa programme and reduce the overall immigration levels from currently averaging 1.05 million to 260,000 a year.

It seeks to increase the allotment of green cards by an impressive 45 per cent from the current 120,000 to 175,000 per annum.

Indian-American technology professionals, who come to the US mainly on H-1B visas and opt for green cards, are expected to be a major beneficiary of the Act.

As per unofficial estimate, there are nearly 500,000 Indians waiting in the queue for Green Cards and have to seek annual extensions of their H-1B visas. Many wait for decades to get their green cards. — *PTI*

China's Silk Road hits $14bn hurdle in Pakistan

Beijing, Jan. 11: China's plan for a modern Silk Road of railways, ports and other facilities linking Asia with Europe hit a $14 billion pothole in Pakistan.

Pakistan's relations with Beijing are so close that officials call China their "Iron Brother." Despite that, plans for the Diamer-Bhasha dam on the Indus in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir, were thrown into turmoil in November 2017 when the chairman of Pakistan's water authority said that Beijing wanted an ownership stake in the $14 billion hydropower project. He rejected that as against Pakistani interests.

China issued a denial but the official withdrew the dam from among dozens of projects being jointly developed by the two countries.

On Silk Road troubles in Pakistan, Robert Koepp, an analyst in Hong Kong

> **From Pakistan to Tanzania to Hungary, projects under 'Belt and Road Initiative' are being cancelled, renegotiated or delayed due to disputes about costs or complaints**

for research firm Economist Corporate Network, said, "Pakistan is one of the countries that is in China's hip pocket, and for Pakistan to stand up and say, 'I'm not going to do this with you', shows it's not as 'win-win' as China says it is." The two governments are developing facilities with a total cost of $60 billion, including power plants and railways, to link China's far west with the Chinese-built port of Gwadar on the Indian Ocean.

A visit by a Chinese assistant foreign minister in November 2017 produced no agreement on railway projects in the southern city of Karachi valued at $10 billion and a $260 million airport for Gwadar.

From Pakistan to Tanzania to Hungary, projects under President Xi Jinping's signature "Belt and Road Initiative" are being cancelled, renegotiated or delayed due to disputes about costs or complaints that host countries get too little out of projects built by Chinese companies and financed by loans from Beijing that must be repaid.

In some areas, Beijing is suffering a political backlash due to fears of domination by Asia's biggest economy.

Governments from Washington to Moscow to New Delhi are uneasy Beijing is trying to use its "Belt and Road Initiative" to develop a China-centred political structure that will erode their influence. — *AP*